

Hello, my name is Ginger. I am a target of bullying in the workplace in a state agency. This is my story.

I have been a registered nurse for more than forty years and have worked full time for most of them. I am Master's prepared and come with lots of valuable experience. I have worked in some pretty intense specialties where the nurses are known to be "tough, tight and intense". For example, neurosurgical ICU, operating room, dialysis both chronic and acute peritoneal and hemodialysis, staff development and management. I have worked through the days of autoclaving to disposables, the beginning of HIV, the beginning of organ transplants and immunosuppressive drugs, prions and "Mad Cow Disease". Life experience, the birth of my only child and the need to work the night shift to avoid child care issues, brought me to correctional nursing.

I was delighted to work for the state. Those were the people who came into the hospital to sight deficiencies. I thought that I would have before me not only all the best policies and procedures in place, but also the best of the best equipment. I was unprepared for what I found. It did not take long to observe bullying like none I had ever seen before. The first few weeks of orientation I witnessed clicks, power struggles and bullying. I thought that working on the night shift I would avoid this "mess". However, I knew the time would come when I would somehow make it to the "shit list". I had about two uneventful years of work. However, throughout it all, almost ten years, I love my job in correctional nursing. I feel that it is worthwhile work. Sometimes the funniest things happen and sometimes just a smile can bring peace and comfort to a convict.

To this day I do not know what it actually was that moved me to the outer circle when the torture began. Perhaps it was a combination of events. I had avoided clicks and I did the work that was expected of me and more. I did, however, speak out when I witnessed unjust treatment of my coworkers. I earned respect from my peers on the night shift and the respect of custody. In 2006 I was awarded the Preservation of Life Award from custody. I had good annual service ratings and my work was never questioned.

However, when I began to do overtime on the evening shift instead of the night shift and then I transferred to the evening shift from the night shift, my situation changed. Frequently I was called into administration's office for a multitude of petty instances, things that were done by others but went unnoticed. I wondered, and asked, how these "offenses" were being brought to the attention of management. The explanation given was that it was picked up on audit; but other nurses' work was not picked up on audit. The nurse that worked opposite me on the day shift occasionally was in those meetings. She had stated that she did not want to work with me, that she did not want me there and that she did not like me. Eventually, after asking multiple times, it was revealed to me that it was the day shift nurse who brought the infractions to

management's attention. My peers had told me the same, but I did not believe them. I thought the day nurse and I had an understanding between us not to run and tattle but to point out to the other person mistakes or omissions and to correct what could be corrected. This I was doing for her. Eventually, occurrences were bundled, I was written up, brought before Labor Relations multiple times, and then the fair rating was skipped and I was downgraded to "an unsatisfactory employee" without forewarning. My first unsatisfactory rating had a list of items cited, some of which were out and out lies (which I pointed out to my supervisor to no avail). Every time my supervisor spoke to me, regardless of the outcome, was cited as an offense. I asked for a work plan to document progress, and was declined the benefit of that opportunity. Meetings with my supervisor were stopped, citing that I was antagonistic. I asked for the final report but was denied. My work was gone over with a fine tooth comb; anything I did was not good enough. I grieved the service rating; it was overturned to a Fair and then I was slammed with another unsatisfactory rating. I filed a CHRO complaint based on race and age, as that was the only option left for me. After days of testimony CHRO ruled in favor of management, as race and age could not be proven to their satisfaction. As in the list of items on my service ratings, some of management's testimony was not true. For example, the two supervisors's stated that I left the building without notifying them when one of the supervisor's actually came to my assistance in the Ladies' Room. However, two against one and no tapes available of the hall way in Medical to show what actually happened. Discipline soon moved to suspensions, not one but two five day suspensions six months apart. The first suspension, another nurse made the same oversight and was given a written warning. It was his second time for the same offense, my first, but I was suspended. In my defense for myself, I testified in Labor Relations that I was being targeted. Labor Relations told me more than once to bring examples of others doing the same behavior and going undisciplined. Finally I did so. Labor Relations' response was that I was justifying my behavior and not taking responsibility for my actions.

Over time the bullying, the constant surveillance, the targeting and out and out disrespect for me and my work took its toll on me. I am treated differently from my co-workers; on occasion my supervisor will ignore me and speak around me as if I was not present. I was put on blood pressure medicine, I began to get flare ups with arthritis which requires periodic treatment and bought me an FMLA, and I was hospitalized with chest pain. It has taken a toll on my family requiring counseling.

Workplace bullying needs to be identified for what it is. It is expensive, costing the state lots and lots of money and quality of work. It is unnecessary and needs to stop. The bullies need to be made accountable for their actions. It has gone on long enough.

Respectfully submitted, Virginia McKee

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